

REMARKS

This amendment is submitted in response to the Examiner's Action dated September 5, 2003. Applicants have amended the claims to clarify key features of the invention and overcome the claim rejections. No new matter has been added, and the amendments place the claims in better condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully request entry of the amendments to the claims. Where discussion/arguments are provided below in response to the claim rejections, those arguments reference the claims in their amended form.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

At paragraph 8 of the Office Action, Examiner states that Claims 5-6, 12 and 17-20 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants thank the Examiner for extending the conditional allowance of these claims. However, Applicants have amended the independent claims and provides below several reasons why the amendments to the independent claims places those claims in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully request Examiner extend the allowance to cover all pending claims.

CLAIMS REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 112

At paragraph 2 of the Office Action, Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claim 13 has been canceled and the features incorporated into Claim 8 in more definite form. This renders the §112 rejection moot. Applicants, therefore, respectfully request removal of the §112 rejection.

CLAIMS REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

At paragraph 4 of the Office Action, Claims 1-2, 7-8 and 14-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being clearly anticipated by Alkhatib (U.S. Patent No. 6,532,217). Allowable subject matter has been incorporated into Claim 14, overcoming the present rejection of Claim 14-15 and rendering Claims 14-20 allowable.

With regards to the other claims (1-13), Alkhatib fails to teach or suggest each feature recited by the respective independent claims (1 and 8) and thus does not anticipate Applicants' claims. For example, Claim 1 recites: "maskaddress that includes a prefix indicating a number of

relevant bits within consecutive addresses utilized within said maskaddress" (emphasis added). Also, Claim 8 recites: "when ...a **negative address** is affiliated with said maskaddress, **checking** said destination address **against** said **negative addresses**" and "**rejecting** said packet **when** said destination address **matches** said negative address" (emphasis added).

Alkhatib provides a system for determining a network address by providing a subnet mask for two or more nodes on a network. Alkhatib's method allows a new node to select common address components among the nodes (the subnet mask) and then append a specific host address to identify the particular node from the others within the subnet. Alkhatib is devoid of any teaching or suggestion of tracking the number of bits within the subnet mask and assigning that number to a prefix that is a part of the maskaddress for the group of nodes. In fact, Alkhatib specifically states that "each bit in the subnet mask corresponds to a bit in the IP address," clearly eliminating any consideration for additional bits (i.e., a prefix) indicating the number of group identifying bits within the maskaddress. Alkhatib is also devoid of any teaching or suggestion of providing "negative" (or absent) node address information for nodes missing within a group of consecutively addressed nodes that make up the group represented by the maskaddress.

From a claim language perspective, Alkhatib fails to teach or suggest providing a maskaddress containing a prefix and related functionality. Alkhatib also fails to teach or suggest a negative address feature and associated functionality.

The standard for a § 102 rejection requires that the reference teach each element recited in the claims set forth within the invention. As clearly outlined above, Alkhatib fails to meet this standard and therefore does not anticipate Applicants' invention.

CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

At paragraph 7 of the Office Action, Claims 3-4, 9-11 and 16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Alkhatib. As explained above, the amendments to the independent claims overcome the rejection of those claims and necessarily overcome the §103 rejections of the present claims.

CONCLUSION

Applicants have diligently responded to the Office Action by amending the claims to provide key features of the invention in the independent claims. Applicants have further explained why the claims are neither anticipated by nor unpatentable over Alkhatib. The amendments and arguments overcome the § 102 and §103 rejections, and Applicants, therefore, respectfully request reconsideration of the rejections and issuance of a Notice of Allowance for all claims now pending.

Applicants also respectfully request the Examiner contact the undersigned attorney of record at (512) 542-2100 if such would further or expedite the prosecution of the present Application.

Respectfully submitted,



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Registered with Limited Recognition (see attached)

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